



MATT BLUNT, GOVERNOR • DEBORAH E. SCOTT, DIRECTOR

P.O. BOX 1527 • BROADWAY STATE OFFICE BUILDING • JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65102-1527  
WWW.DSS.MO.GOV • 573-751-4815 • 573-751-3203 FAX

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 7, 2008

Contact: Brian Hauswirth  
(573) 526-0407

## **7<sup>th</sup> Circuit Children's Division Office Meets Accreditation Standards**

**Liberty-** The Children's Division announced today that the 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit office of the Department of Social Services' Children's Division has met the standards for accreditation by the Council on Accreditation (COA). The 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit covers Clay County. The 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit joins 28 circuits and the state's Central Administration and Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline which have met accreditation standards since the onsite review process began.

"I want to congratulate staff in the 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit for their hard work and tremendous dedication to reach these national, best practice standards," said James Harrison, Children's Division Acting Director. "The 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit joins a growing list of Circuit offices that are setting a great example for the remaining Circuits in the Children's Division."

The COA is an international, independent, not-for-profit accrediting body that accredits behavioral health care and social service programs. Its rigorous accrediting process reviews all aspects of an organization and evaluates them based on national standards of best practices.

A panel of reviewers from various states found the 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit to be in compliance with each of the major categories for the 832 standards with which an agency must comply to be accredited. The local office had to meet service standards in adoption services, foster and kinship care services, child protection services and family-centered casework as well as organization and management standards in general areas such as ethical practice, financial management and organizational integrity.

"Each local jurisdiction will go through a similar process of strengthening their practices; the goal is for the entire system to be accredited. Accreditation is making us a stronger, more professional organization to meet the incredible demands placed on the child welfare system as we work with communities in the fight to protect Missouri's children. This process is making us a better child welfare organization," Harrison said.

Gov. Blunt has supported the accreditation plan which began in 2004 when then-House Speaker Catherine Hanaway sponsored a landmark children's services reform bill including accreditation for the Children's Division.

The Children's Division expects to be fully accredited by 2009. The state's child protection system is organized around Missouri's 45 judicial circuits.

###

RELAY MISSOURI  
FOR HEARING AND SPEECH IMPAIRED  
1-800-735-2466 VOICE • 1-800-735-2966 TEXT PHONE